



New England Agricultural Statistics Service

a field office of the National Agricultural Statistics Service
United States Department of Agriculture

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Maine Wild Blueberries

December 28, 1999

A special "THANK YOU" goes to Maine Wild Blueberry growers and processors who have helped us by completing wild blueberry surveys during 1999.

WILD BLUEBERRY CROP SLIGHTLY ABOVE FIVE-YEAR AVERAGE

MAINE WILD BLUEBERRY CROP: According to the Maine Department of Agriculture, Maine's 1999 wild blueberry crop was 65.9 million pounds, 5 percent above 1998's output, but 11 percent below 1997.

In general, there was no visible evidence of winterkill to bushes. The season got off to an early start due to mild winter conditions that continued into the spring. Good bloom was reported at many locations, and was accompanied by excellent pollinating conditions. As of mid-June, crop development averaged 10-14 days early, with good to excellent fruit set. Operators reported good berry size and quality as of mid-July, however lack of significant rainfall placed severe stress on the crop, and most areas needed rain. Disease problems were minimal due to dry conditions that persisted since spring. Weed problems most prevalent were St John's Wort, Golden Rod, Wild Rose bushes, and grasses making raking difficult in many areas. Insect damage was minor, but thrips and span worms were seen in many fields.

During the mid-July survey, most growers reported that crop prospects were very good, but rain was needed immediately for a full crop to be harvested. Despite mostly good growing conditions, the forecasted production of 71 million pounds did not materialize due to a lack of moisture in August.

According to the Maine Department of Agriculture, final payments to growers for the 1999 wild blueberries sold to processors are expected to average 50 cents per pound, four cents more than received for the 1998 crop.

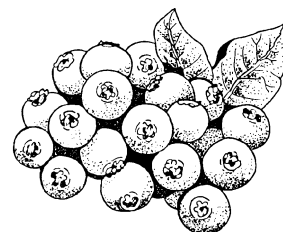
NORTH AMERICAN BLUEBERRY CROP: According to Dave Yarbrough, Extension Blueberry Specialist, "The wild blueberry crop was 164.5 million pounds, which is 12 million pounds above the previous five-year average. This is from the record crops in all of the Maritime Provinces, except Newfoundland and Quebec. The crop in Nova Scotia was up 75% and in Quebec was double the average. This resulted in Canada producing 29% of the North American crop and Maine producing 19%. The remaining 52% were cultivated blueberries."

WILD BLUEBERRIES: Production and Value, 1989 - 1999

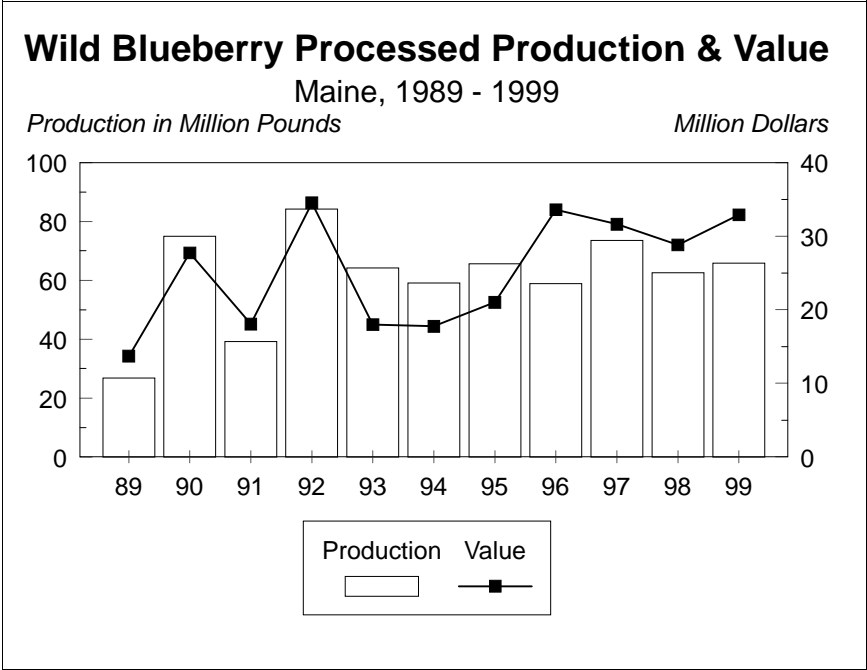
STATE & YEAR	Total Production ^{1/}	Blueberries for Processing		
		Production	Price per Pound	Value of Production
		1,000 Pounds	Cents	1,000 Dollars
Maine				
1989	27,050	26,838	51	13,687
1990	75,294	74,951	37	27,732
1991	39,464	39,255	46	18,057
1992	84,513	84,193	41	34,519
1993	64,562	64,212	28	17,979
1994	59,495	59,145	30	17,744
1995	65,944	65,639	32	21,004
1996	59,198	58,930	57	33,590
1997	73,816	73,540	43	31,622
1998	62,981	62,621	46	28,806
1999 ^{2/}	65,864	65,803	50	32,902

^{1/} Includes fresh and processed production.

^{2/} Preliminary Price and Value based on expectations as of September 1999.



The wild blueberry estimating program is funded through a cooperative agreement with the Maine Department of Agriculture as a service to growers and others in the industry. The Maine Wild Blueberry report is published and available on the Internet in December. The next Wild Blueberry report will be published and available on the Internet in mid-July. It will contain the final price statistics for the 1999 crop and the production forecast for the 2000 crop.



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